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The Great Pyramids have always captured our imagination. For medieval Muslims, they were a relic of a ancient age of knowledge; an edifice of magic, astrology, and the jinn.

A thread-

By the 9th century there were several theories for who actually built the pyramids.

One stated they were built by the last jinn king, ibn Jann who ruled in the age before humanity.

In this narration, the jinn were the original inhabitants of the world. They filled the earth with wonder and corruption in equal measure.

Eventually a great jinn war broke out in which the angels sided with the goodly jinn and drove out the wicked ones.

Though the jinn king died in the war, mighty ifrits and ghuls guard the pyramids still.

The ifits arrive as mighty zawbaa, or whirlwinds of sand while the ghul lead unwary humans into the desert so they may eat them.

The jinn use phantom fires, sights, and sounds to drive the visitors mad.

The ancient knowledge of the pyramids was then passed down from Ibn Jann to humans who were caretakers of it until the coming of the Flood.

The scholar Fodor records other theories, one of which states the pyramids were built by Hermes, the legendary philosopher.

The historian Mas'udi claims the pyramids were actually built as a tomb for Hermes who becomes associated with the Prophet Idris or the Biblical Enoch.

Abu Ma’shar writes, Hermes is actually a title signifying a master of ancient mysteries and refers actually to several people.

He goes on to say Hermes was the first prophet granted knowledge of the future. He was taught the science of astrology, medicine, and divination.

Using his knowledge of astrology, Hermes/Idris/Enoch predicting the coming of the Great Flood. He foresaw it in the planetary alignment or conjunction in Pisces and so he built the mighty pyramids in order to preserve the knowledge of the sciences.

Some say he was buried with his lost knowledge. Yet, Idris is also one of the living prophets, one who was elevated to heaven and has not died and so in another retelling, he actually resides inside the pyramid sitting upon a throne with an ancient tablet in his hands.

The tablet contains secret knowledge.

Driven by a desire for treasure, the 9th century caliph, Al Ma’mun set a team of diggers to the pyramids.

They heated the stones with great fires then poured vinegar over them to rapidly cool and crack them.

After an arduous effort, they were frustratingly met with empty rooms and passages.

He could not uncover its legendary treasure.

Hermes built the pyramids with the help of planetary spirits, the ruhaniyya and together they built them according to celestial mathematics.

These spirits watch over the tombs, leading the unworthy away from its mysteries.

Whether it is the jinn or the ruhaniyya, the pyramids take on a reputation as a place of unique magical power.

Talismans made using the dust of the pyramids at the correct astrological time are said to grant the mage ancient wisdom and secrets.

In astrological lore, the pyramids become associated with Mercury, the planet linked with Hermes’ mastery of language, divination, and alchemy.

They were also connected with Gemini, the constellation Orion, and the star ash shira or al jawza (Sirius).

Contrary to the racist undertones of the belief that aliens built the pyramids because ancient people, especially ancient black people, couldn’t possibly have had the knowledge to built them, the medieval theories view it in the reverse.

For medieval Muslim writers, there was a time before the Flood of great knowledge, of sacred sciences, and wisdom—a recognition of ancient Egyptian and African civilizations as mighty societies in their own right.

We see this evidenced in the final theory of the pyramids recorded by Al Idrisi which states they were built by the ancient Yemeni king, Shaddan ibn Ad who like Hermes was said to have been gifted with knowledge of the stars.

He, too, built the pyramids to protect knowledge from destruction.

Repeatedly we see knowledge as the true treasure.

The medieval theories of the pyramids preserve older local lore drawing together Egyptian star lore, Amazigh stories of the ghul, Yemenite legendary kings, syncretizing them with the Biblical-Quranic Enoch-Idris.

In turn Idris was syncretized with the Greco-Egyptian Hermes and the older Egyptian deity Thoth.

They reflect not only an interest in the pyramids, but an enduring belief in the existence of ancient knowledge.

It is also a stark reminder that by the 9th century the knowledge of how the pyramids were built was lost to the fog of time.

Abu Ma’shar and Idrisi writing a thousand years ago are closer to us in time than to the builders of the pyramids.

If you are interested in more jinn lore, check out my patreon. I just released a break down of one of the most famous protection talismans from the medieval Islamic world said to guard against jinn and the evil evil—perhaps the right tone for 2021.

https://t.co/OWDXsBjUiR

I'll cover more lore on jinn, astrology, and magic in future threads